



# The Weekly Wrap Up

May 5, 2006

From Viola Miller, Tennessee's Commissioner for  
The Department of Children's Services

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## The World's Biggest Fish Fry

For the World's Biggest Fish Fry, annually held the last full week of April, the weather was beautiful. The grand parade was held on Friday April 28, 2006.

We had a group of riders and a wagon who entered in the parade to promote recruitment of Resource Parents. The counties involved were Benton, Carroll and Henry.

The wagon was pulled by a team of Sorrell horses Tom and Dan. Billy and Sandra Blankenship from Henry County provided the wagon and team. Riders included Dana Lowry, Recruiter/Trainer, Chris Adamson, Elizabeth Lowry, and Rebecca and Hannah Mallard.

The crowd was estimated more than 50,000 and many dignitaries were here for the parade, including Gov. Phil Bredesen, who rode a black-and-white paint horse.

Dana Lowry

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## Human Nature 101 / Part 2

Last week, we were reminded to use those magic words “Please and Thank You” on a daily basis with our co-workers. This week, we want to learn the practice of Three-Way Recognition. Traditionally, we think of recognition coming from a manager to an employee. But recognition is *everyone’s* job. Think about it in these 3 ways:

- What are qualities, skills or characteristics you appreciate about your co-workers?
- What do you appreciate about your manager/supervisor? Yes, they need and deserve recognition too
- If you are a manager, what do you appreciate about your employees?

When people are routinely recognized for their efforts, they begin to trust that their hard work will be acknowledged. And for you, recognition becomes a natural, daily process.

Today’s Thought: Develop an “ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE”

Sandy Sauceman, Personnel Analyst  
D C S Human Resource Development

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*The New York Times:*

## Judge Bars Subsidy Cuts in Adopting Foster Children

By [ERIK ECKHOLM](#)

May 2, 2006 -- A federal judge in [Missouri](#) yesterday blocked a state law that cut aid to parents adopting foster children, ruling that it violated federal statutes and the Constitution's equal protection clause.

The case had been watched by children's advocates nationally, who said the law, which passed last year as part of a broader effort to curb social spending, was a dangerous precedent that would undercut the adoption prospects of troubled children.

"We hope that this decision will stem efforts around the country to find inventive ways to cut budgets while harming voiceless populations," said Ira P. Lustbader, a lawyer with Children's Rights, a group in New York that joined in the case with local advocates and parents' groups. "This law made no sense as a legal matter, as a policy matter or as an economic matter."

Gov. Matt Blunt, a Republican, had pushed the law, saying that adoption subsidies were spiraling out of control and that it made sense to focus money on the neediest parents. The governor did not issue a statement yesterday.

Hours after the ruling, by Judge Scott O. Wright of United States District Court in St. Louis, the state filed a notice of appeal with the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, a spokesman for the state attorney general's office, John Fougere, said.

The state said that such subsidies cost it \$60 million a year and that the law would save it \$12 million.

Critics said that by discouraging adoptions the law would end up costing the state more over time in foster expenses and in later social costs, because so many former foster children end up homeless, with drug problems or in prison.

Finding permanent homes for foster children who cannot return to their biological parents is a national goal, backed up by federal, state and local subsidies for adoptive parents who are often taking on children with cognitive or medical disabilities. In Missouri, such payments can range from \$225 to \$650 a month, depending on needs for therapy or other special care.

The law required adoptive parents to reapply for subsidies annually, voiding contracts that had guaranteed aid to age 18. For a subgroup of parents, whose children were not covered by a federal program that bars means tests, it ended aid if the parents earned more than 200 percent of the poverty line, or \$38,314 a year for a family of four.

In August, Judge Wright temporarily delayed invoking the law. After a one-day trial last week, he issued a permanent injunction yesterday, saying that the annual renewal of subsidy agreements violated federal law and that the means test was discriminatory because it applied just to a subgroup without rational justification.

"The means test will not save taxpayer money, but will increase the overall cost of child welfare in the State of Missouri," he said. Several states have acted to curb adoption subsidies or eligibility, but the Missouri law went further than others by retroactively imposing means tests and other changes on parents who had adopted in the past.

Promoting the adoption of foster children who cannot return to their biological parents was a goal of federal laws passed in 1980 and 1997. Such adoptions have increased to 50,000 in recent years from 28,000 in 1996.

Related aid to parents has grown, reaching \$4 billion last year, with half paid by the federal government, according to a study in the March issue of *The Social Service Review*.

The increasing costs have drawn the scrutiny of financially beleaguered states.

If a subsidy cut discourages adoptions, that is likely to prove shortsighted, said Richard P. Barth, a professor of social welfare at the University of North Carolina. Professor Barth is a co-author of the March study, which found that the public cost of supporting a child in the foster system tended to surpass significantly any adoption subsidies.

"Our research shows that adoptive parents pay quite a substantial amount for services that their children need, and this is only partly offset by the subsidies they receive," Professor Barth said. "These parents are taking on a substantial challenge and deserve the appreciation of the public."

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